DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 140 EA 013 169

AUTHOR Harper, Mary-Angela
TITLE Putting It All Together: A Model for Parish Educational Policymaking. Second Edition.
INSTITUTION National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 35p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications Sales, National Catholic Educational Assn., Suite 350, One Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036 ($2.25 prepaid; all orders totaling $15.00 or less must be prepaid)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; *Boards of Education; Catholic Educators; *Catholic Schools; Church Responsibility; Committees; Decision Making; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Governance; Leadership Responsibility; *Models; *Organization; Parent School Relationship; *Policy Formation; Priests; Religious Education

ABSTRACT

The rationale of shared responsibility by the hierarchy and the laity for directing Catholic school and non-school religious educational programs is clearly present in the Vatican Council II documents, which state that members of the laity should be involved in all decisions affecting their lives and that appropriate structures should be established for this purpose. The organizational model proposed in this booklet is designed for the parish that has enough parishioners to compose two major policy-making bodies--a parish council and an education board. Organizational structures of the parish council and an education board are explained. The roles of the pastor, administrators, and parents' groups are discussed. In the appendices are graphics of the model and a skeletal outline of a constitution and by-laws for the parish council and education board. (Author/MLF)

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By Mary-Angela Harper

A Model for Parish Educational Policymaking

Putting It All Together

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of Boards of Education, 1979
National Catholic Educational Association
Suite 350, One Dupont Circle
Washington, DC 20036

Putting It All Together

A Model for Parish Educational Policymaking

—Second Edition—

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Congratulations, typical parish USA! You answered the Vatican Council Fathers' call for shared responsibility with characteristically American energy and enthusiasm and now some type of formal structure for participatory policymaking in Catholic education exists in practically every U.S. parish!

The ordinary forms of these structures are the parish board of total education, the parish school board and the parish council education committee. Although most parishes opt for only one policymaking body for educational programs, many are reporting that they have at least two, usually a board and a council education committee. In addition, PTA's, home-school associations, or parent groups are often present as well on the educational scene. The question frequently asked, therefore, is *"How do we put it all together?"*

Of course, there is more than one answer to this question, involving a variety of possible organizational models. The plan proposed herein is based on the principles of (a) subsidiarity and complementarity, (b) necessary distinction of roles and (c) division of labor.[1] This model is designed for the parish that has enough (though not necessarily many) parishioners to compose two major policy-making bodies—a parish council and an education board. To make the model work, however, it is important:

—to understand the job of each regarding policymaking for the parish education programs;

—to know how these two groups relate to each other.

1. See Murdick, Olin J., "Achieving Shared Responsibility in the American Church," The National Association of Boards of Education, NCEA, April 1977, for a treatment of the theoretical basis of this model.

Step I

Understanding the Parish Council

Is the council the "boss" of the parish? Well, yes and no.

The parish council, sitting in collegial assembly with the spiritual leader of the local faith community—the pastor—is responsible for identifying and responding to *all* the needs of the parish. One of these needs is education, of course; but the people have other needs as well, and the council must take them all into account.

To do its job, the council, with the pastor, will provide a forum in which the parish faithful can dialogue about their values and their needs. Once these values and needs are pinpointed, the council will then formulate them as formal "goals," put them into order of pressing importance (i.e. prioritize them) and also decide how the parish resources, financial and human, will be used to take care of these needs.

In the course of the council's discussions, educational programs (e.g., school, CCD, among others) may be recommended and authorized and, once in operation, will be coordinated by the council. Such coordination, however, is of the most general sort of caretaking to guard against conflict or competition between the various efforts.

In addition, the council, at a specified annual meeting, will review all parish programs, educational and otherwise, in order to determine as far as possible how well they are achieving the values of the faith community, and also, filling its needs.

The parish council does *not*, however, involve itself either in the designing or in the operating of educational programs such as the school or CCD. (This is the professional educators' job.) Nor does it define program objectives nor select policies that direct these programs, nor monitor in any way the program operation. (These are responsibilities of yet another group of "specialists" to be discussed herein, the education board.)

The council may, if it chooses, function through standing committees, whose responsibility it is to concentrate on a particular parish need and set of values. One of these committees on the current scene is the education committee assigned to keep tabs on the local faith community's educational requirements and also to identify and address, in general fashion, the educational aspect or implications of all other needs.

Council Education Committee

First and always, remember that the (council) education committee is a *part* of the parish council. In fact, the committee *is* the council, so to speak, by delegation, focusing its attention on *one* of its many faith community needs—education. Like all committees, this one can be defined as "a creature of the parent body,"[2] as such, sharing the rights, privileges, responsibilities and functions of the creating body, and sharing also its boundaries and limitations.

To put this important idea another way, the education committee, like its parent, the council, is a *general* body, concerned with general (i.e. goal-determining) policy decisions, *not* with specific program-determining decisions. These decisions, then, are brought before the entire council, which receives, approves and appropriates them as its own. The council will subsequently pass along those needs and values to its partner in the enterprise of shared responsibility, the education board, which is empowered to deal with them more specifically and programatically.

"Doings" of the Committee

An education committee may:

- ☐ talk about new, changing, continuing educational needs in the parish;
- ☐ discuss varieties of programs that might meet these needs and select certain ones as appropriate for the parish;
- ☐ discuss the educational aspect of other parish efforts (e.g. educating the people for new procedures connected with the Sacrament of Reconciliation);
- ☐ discuss projects for soliciting greater financial support from the faithful for the operation of educational programs;
- ☐ encourage, through public statements, the parishioners' interest in these programs and in the educational policy process by urging them to attend board meetings, to cooperate with board actions that concern the faith community, and to participate in board elections both by willingness to serve and by voting for members;
- ☐ provide for a parish library or reading room and for the purchase of good Catholic literature.

Specific (and appropriate) topic examples for discussion by an education committee are:

- ☐ the percentage of parish adults currently enrolled in continuing education programs and in attendance at lectures;

2. Murdick, *Ibid.*, p. 8.

- ☐ numbers of parish children in parish school; numbers of non-parish/non-Catholic children in school;
- ☐ numbers of elementary/secondary level children in CCD program;
- ☐ kinds of parish facilities and resources available for special education of the handicapped or exceptional children in the parish, and for those with emotional problems;
- ☐ the nature and extent of parental participation in educational policymaking.

Step II

Understanding the Education Board—Total and School

The parish board of education, whether its responsibility encompasses all formal educational programs or only the school, is *subordinate* to the council; it is *specialized* in its function; and its function *requires higher coordination* for integral effectiveness.

A word of warning, however: Don't settle for a superficial understanding of these characteristics. Avoid the easy judgment that "I guess I know fairly well what these terms mean." Be sure you know their *exact* meaning.

The "subordination" of the board to the council, in fact, means that since the board's functions flow from goals and values previously identified by the council, the latter body should ultimately evaluate the board's effectiveness by deciding how well its program objectives and policies have achieved parish educational goals.

Subordination does *not* mean that the board must submit its program objectives and policies to the council for approval. The reason, of course, is that such a usurpation of function would violate the principle of subsidiarity, depriving a lower body, the board of education, of a function which it ought to perform and can. In this respect the board is autonomous and must operate with independence in its proper area of competence — policymaking for educational programs.

Nor does subordination mean that the board's executive officer (e.g., the principal, DRE, etc.) reports on his/her work regularly and directly to the council.[1] Such action would represent, too, a violation of the rights of the board by whom the administrator is properly selected, and to whom he/she is accountable.

The "specialization" of the board refers, as stated before, to its direct concern with programs. Its job is to formulate specific objectives for the programs and to measure the degree of their actual attainment; to select specific policies that will guide the designing and direct the operation of a particular program or

[1]The council, of course, has the right to request an *occasional* report, but not to demand regular and direct reports.

programs and to evaluate how well these policies achieved the stated objectives; to monitor, by means of the administrator's reports, the administrator's decisions in implementing board policies. In practice, this last function involves regular briefing of the board on how policies are being implemented and how well the operation is progressing.

All these functions, since they occur in sequence, can be diagrammed to form a circle.[4]

The board's "need of coordination" refers again to the fact that the faith community has many requirements and will mount many programs, only some of which will be formally educational. The practical demands (e.g. financial, personnel, physical plant, etc.) of all these programs must be coordinated and final decision made regarding allocation and disbursement. One concrete expression of this effort is the total parish budget, which includes and coordinates individual program budgets. Obviously this process requires each parish agency to prepare and submit a request for operating funds to the council, which then reconciles these requests, keeping in mind priorities and other established criteria. Such a process can be considered a form of *coordination.* It also serves as an example of practical, prudent and desirable "subordination," since each individual budget will be approved or adjusted by the general decision-making body.

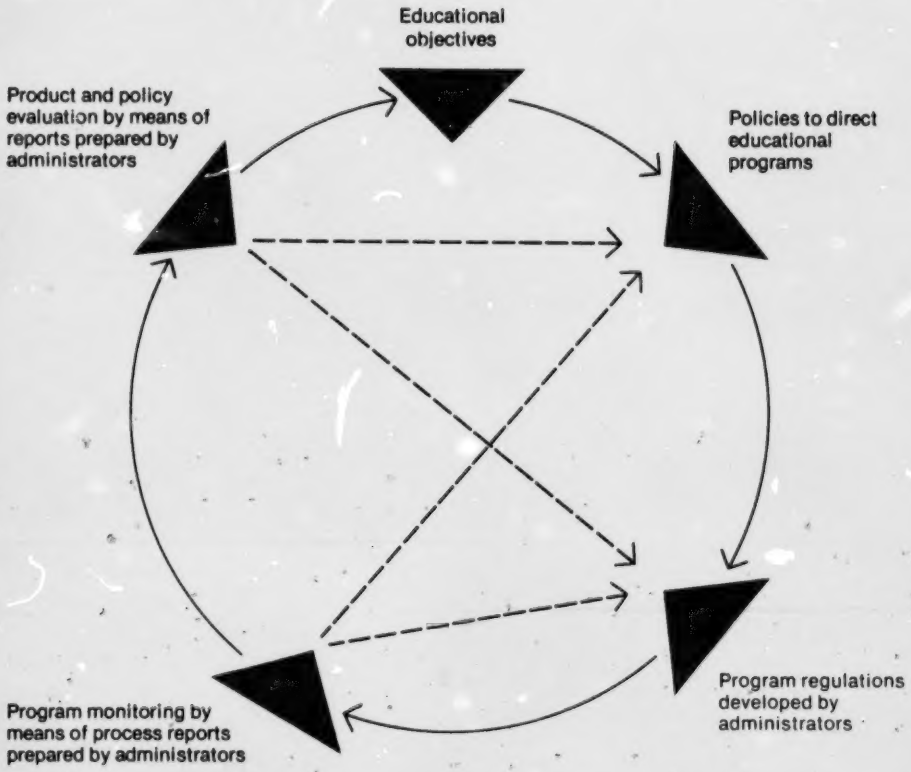
The Board/Council Education Committee Dilemma

There is a tendency in parishes today to speculate about the desirability of eliminating the separate board of education and of giving its functions and responsibilities to the education committee of the parish council. Reasons to support this move include (a) organizational simplicity ("Why multiply structures?") and (b) distinguishable "Catholic" operating style ("Why ape public education?")

Simplicity, however, is a justifiable motive only when it does not obstruct operational effectiveness; and there is considerable evidence that many problems and much confusion result when a council education committee tries to replace an education board. Not the least cause of such turmoil is the fact that policymaking for sophisticated educational programs is a highly specialized, intricate process and extremely demanding of the people involved with it. To function competently, these policymakers require special and intensive training. It is unrealistic (not to say inconsiderate and unreasonable) to expect even generous and dedicated parishioners to

4 See figure A. This diagram is adapted from the "loop" developed by Daniel R. Davies, Ed.D. and Henry Brickell, co-authors of the Davies-Brickell System, who have given permission for its reproduction by NABE.

Figure A **The Educational Policy Process**


Educational objectives
Policies to direct educational programs
Program regulations developed by administrators
Program monitoring by means of process reports prepared by administrators
Product and policy evaluation by means of reports prepared by administrators

take on such a burden in addition to the functions and responsibilities they must exercise as parish council members.

Another consideration dictating caution in counte.productive simplification is the importance of maintaining, in a visible fashion, the nature and function of the pastoral council as a *general body*. The council should be perceived by the people to concern itself equally with *all* the faith community's needs and problems, and as making equitable and objective judgments. This is more likely to happen if the council is not immersed in the specifics of program policymaking, especially if the program's policy requirements are demanding and time-consuming. Also, members of the council education committee that would attempt to function as a specialized education board are placed in the schizophrenic position of needing to remember which role they are executing at a given time, and of flip-flopping between two jobs, each calling for a different focus and kind of attention.

Still another obstacle to effective specialized policymaking by council committees is the tendency of these bodies to become involved in administrative matters. The youth committee of a pastoral council, for example, is frequently the group which plans, organizes and supervises special teenage activities. While this type of involvement is valuable and sometimes even necessary for some committees, it could be disastrous in the case of an educational policymaking body which must scrupulously honor the distinction between policy and administration and avoid meddling with the work of the professionals.

A Model Solution to the Board/Education Committee Dilemma

A helpful move in resolving the education board/committee dilemma is to recognize that good order and optimum efficiency in today's complicated educational world require the *sharing* of policymaking responsibilities *based on the principles of subsidiarity and complementariety*. To be more specific, a council may designate, if it so chooses, an education committee of council members who will concentrate on this area of the council's concern, and in addition, authorize the establishment of a separate Catholic education board to give specialized policy direction to educational programs.

The *functions of the council education committee,* then, would be

(a) to identify the faith community's educational needs,
(b) to formulate these needs into goals,
(c) to recommend programs to meet those needs/goals, and
(d) to present these goals and program recommendations to the council for acceptance and authorization. In addition, it

could undertake the various activities listed on page 3 under "Doings" of the council education committee.

A Word of Encouragement; a Word of Caution

Many happy results will flow from a model which distinguishes clearly the responsibilities and functions of a generalist policy-making body (the council) from those of the specialists (e.g. education board) and professional administrators. For one, the general body can operate in a more orderly and efficient fashion because it is not unreasonably burdened. For another, the administrators can perform better when they are receiving policy direction from and reporting to a decision-making group well-briefed about educational issues, rather than to one which is only generally knowledgeable.

A final word of caution, however. If a parish establishes, as recommended, an education board separate from the council, serious care must be taken to achieve a close, organic relationship between the two groups! Such productive interaction can take place at the moment of educational goal formulation, and again later at the moment of evaluation. These are natural juncture points at which council and board can reinforce each other. They are also occasions for experiencing the fact that neither body is operating in isolation, and that they are partners, each representing and working for the faith community, though in a different role.

The Pastor: Forgotten Man or Key Agent?

Without question, the pastor, as spiritual leader and pastoral manager of the faith community, is the single most important person in the whole complex of the post-Vatican II parish. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that the entire project of participatory decision-making in education will depend upon his understanding, appreciation, support and cooperation!

But exactly what is his role/relationship with respect to the Catholic education board compared with those he exercises regarding the pastoral council?

Ideally, the *council* is an "extension" of the pastor as he sits with these representatives of the faith community in order to dialogue about all the needs of the faithful and to fashion decisions and solutions for filling those needs.

The pastor's function on the *board,* is somewhat more complex and sensitive. As the *spiritual leader,* he will share his pastoral vision of the parish and contribute other spiritual insights that will enrich and improve the quality of the board's policies. As the *pastoral manager,* he will furnish vital information about parish income, expenditures, etc. which only he possesses.

The Pastor as Board Member

The pastor is a full member of the board, and like his colleagues, votes, participates in policy issue discussions, and honors and abides by the final consensus/majority decision. It is conceivable, of course, that a particular board decision might be opposed to a higher good, of which the pastor as spiritual leader has greater knowledge, and for which he is responsible to a higher authority (i.e. the bishop). If the difficulty cannot be resolved by reasonable discourse, the pastor may have no alternative but to disengage himself from the board's action and to veto its decision.

This probably rare happening (i.e. pastoral veto) is one that well-motivated and properly-informed Catholic boards should appreciate and desire. If, as we insist, Catholic education is significantly different from public education by virtue of its faith commitment, then resource people must be available to intensify that dimension, and mechanisms must exist for its protection. The pastor is that resource man on a Catholic education board; and his veto (or "right of review") serves as a compass that helps the Catholic educational community to stay on spiritual course.

The Pastor's Spiritual Leadership of the Board

Another set of responsibilities requires the pastor to exercise leadership in the spiritual growth of his board members. He will provide these individuals with resources and opportunities for achieving personal Christian maturity and for serving well as *faith* community leaders in educational matters.

In days gone by, pastors were expected to be experts in every area of parish concern, from high finance to plumbing. Today, pastors are perceived as functioning most significantly when they are sharing their faith life with members of their communities, and helping them to become mature believers. It is *in this sense* that we say the pastor (or the bishop or his vicar) holds his seat on a Catholic education board *primarily* as the spiritual leader of the faith community-at-large and performs most importantly as the spiritual leader also of the miniature faith community that is the board.

More specifically, the pastor should be willing to give spiritual direction to individual members and also to provide the group with various prayer experiences and meaningful eucharistic and paraliturgical celebrations. During the course of policy decision deliberations, the pastor should indicate the spiritual dimensions/consequences of the issue; and if these discussions become abrasive or begin to flounder, the pastor might consider calling for a moment of prayer to ask the Spirit's help.

The Pastor as Parish Manager

A matter of some anxiety for pastors and their bishops is whether the pastor's role as board member is in conflict with the pastor's canonical and managerial role and responsibilities for parish education.

This concern is given further specific form by several questions sometimes raised by pastors and bishops:

(1) How does the pastor's managerial responsibility for the parish relate to the administrative responsibilities of the professionals who run their programs in accord with "orders" from the board?

(2) Is the pastor's authority over the school now expressed only through a veto that is rarely exercised and justified each time in writing?

(3) Is the principal now removed from the pastor's direct authority?

(4) Is the pastor now in the unfair position of still being financially responsible for the school, but with only limited influence in budget decisions?

To deal with these questions, it is necessary to reflect at the outset on the following important facts:

(1) Realities frequently overflow the narrow categories of canon law which, therefore, cannot always and in every specific situation give adequate direction.

(2) The original language of canon law, relative to the bishop's authority (and by delegation, the pastor's) over Catholic education, intended to protect doctrinal orthodoxy.

(3) The pastor's role is now appreciated in a different context as a result of the *emphasis of Vatican Council II on the priest's traditional duties as spiritual leader*, and *on the need*, newly articulated by the Council Fathers, *for the hierarchy to share responsibility with the laity.*

A response to the above questions, then, might take the following form: The pastor, as spiritual leader, still retains a decisive and continually-heard voice in all matters concerning the faith life of the community. By implication, therefore, the pastor would clearly and consistently express his vision of religious education, as well as his expectations for the religious education programs. Like all board members, he may recommend any type of policy, of course; but since he is responsible to the bishop for seeing that Church teachings are accurately presented, he may insist also on approving any policy that concerns religious education programs.

In addition, he may, if he chooses, disapprove the hiring of the program administrators (e.g. principal, DRE, etc.) after participating fully in the interview process and having determined that a particular candidate does not share his vision of parish, or that

he/she has other serious problems that will make that person ineffective as a faith community leader in education. All these actions are appropriate to the pastor's role as spiritual leader.

The Pastor and the Professional Staff

The pastor will continue to communicate regularly with the principal, DRE, etc. regarding religious activities in their programs and, of course, be involved with the many school and CCD events, sacramental and educational, in every way suitable to the spiritual leader and important to the students and faculties.

The pastor is not, however, invariably a trained educator, nor necessarily competent in the very technical and sophisticated matters of that field. He properly refrains, therefore, from inserting himself into the academic operations of the educational programs, the privileged domain of the professional staff. These aspects the pastor directs, monitors and evaluates with his colleagues, as a member of the education board. Or, to put it another way, the *pastor's managerial responsibilities* for the school extend to those matters *outside* the authority of the board and/or the professional competency of the educational administrative staff.

With respect to the question of ultimate financial responsibility, it is a current fact that, with some exceptions, most parish and diocesan schools belong legally to the "corporation sole," the bishop of the diocese. For this reason, pastors, as delegates of the bishops, are still *legally liable* for paying the bills.[1] Catholic boards of education, therefore, although empowered to make decisions, have no fiscal liability for the educational programs under their policy direction.

To make sense of this somewhat fuzzy situation, it is necessary to focus on two additional "control" ideas:

(1) The Second Vatican Council's directive to the People of God that *all* must now *share responsibility* for the Church; and

(2) that within a faith community context, *moral liability* can be perceived and executed as if it were as binding upon lay decision-makers as legal liability is upon the bishops and their pastor-delegates.

No Catholic education board, therefore, is going to create, willfully and capriciously, a financial disaster, dump it into the lap of the pastor and then take off for Venezuela. To the contrary, the laity are not only offering the hierarchy their valuable knowledge

[1] In the case of religious congregation schools or schools separately incorporated under a lay board, financial liability belongs to these groups.

and experience in financial matters, but as a result of their involvement in the decision-making process, are more willing to contribute to the financial stability of educational programs under their policy direction.

The important truth, then, upon which bishops and pastors should focus attention, is that now they needn't "sink or swim" alone, nor bear, with only individual resources, the burden of educational decision-making in this complicated world. Lay people are willing and prepared to give policy direction and to help the hierarchy pick up the tab for expensive educational programs.

The Administrator's Two-Fold Role

The chief administrator of the parish educational programs (e.g. the principal, DRE, etc.) is first and foremost a professional educator. This is the person who is solely responsible, with the administrative staff, for the day-to-day program operations. But this person is also the executive officer of the board which gives policy direction to these programs and, therefore, in the nearly inhuman position of being simultaneously a leader and a follower.

To be specific, the chief administrator has *two sets of duties,* one of which relates directly to the educational program(s) and the other to the policy board.

With respect to the programs, the administrator's tasks include:

- designing and operating the actual program, formulating its rules and regulations in line with board policies;
- hiring and firing personnel;
- training and supervising staff;
- assigning and scheduling within the program;
- negotiating and conciliating grievances of staff and students.

With respect to the board, the administrator will translate board policies into rules and regulations which embody these policies. In addition, his/her responsibilities include:

- identification, analysis and reporting of all educational program problems that require policy definition;
- regular examination of current policies, in order to verify their adequacy and relevance;
- preparation of regular progress reports to help the board fulfill its monitoring responsibilities;
- preparation of product reports to help the board accomplish its various evaluation tasks;
- preparation of the expenditure portion of the annual budget for presentation to the board, arranging for consultations with key people and, if necessary, for budget hearings;

- preservicing and inservicing new and experienced members;
- facilitation of communication between the board and its publics regarding educational needs and desires.

Multiple Administrators: Who's the Chief?

A problem frequently encountered in parishes with "total education boards" and with several professional educators directing formal programs (e.g. school principal, CCD director, DRE, continuing education director, etc.) is "Which one should be executive officer of the board?" All are experts in their own fields and, therefore, are responsible for giving professional leadership to the board in these respective areas. But can all program directors relate to the board directly and equally as co-executive officers?

Speaking absolutely, any arrangement is possible if it does, in fact, work well in a particular situation. The *recommended operating procedure,* however, is one which is based on sound management theory and has tested out successfully over the years. This procedural model calls for *only one* of the professional educators to work directly with the board and the others to relate to it *through* this "chief" administrator.

Who would determine which person is to serve in this role? The administrators themselves. The decision could be made annually by the program directors, rotating the job from year to year; or the tenure could be longer, thus giving the "chief administrator" time to develop the skills necessary for functioning competently in this critical role.

Does the choice of one executive officer mean that the other program directors exercise no significant leadership in policy development, and that they sit mute during the board meeting? Or worse yet, does it mean that they may not attend? Positively *no*, on all counts. All program directors are responsible for identifying the policy problems in their own areas, for preparing the necessary information that the board needs to understand those problems, and for making policy recommendations, complete with rationale, for the board's consideration. And every program director is accountable to the board for effective implementation of policies in that particular program area. But the *formal agent* who transmits material to the board and relays directions to the directors is the chief administrator. This arrangement seems to facilitate maximum efficiency and to make the board's work easier, since it allows the policymaking body to interact directly with only one person instead of several.

This is not to say, however, that the other program heads never communicate directly with nor are heard immediately by the board. During the meeting, these persons may sit (symbolically) behind the

chief administrator's seat at the table, and, in the course of the meeting, can easily provide input to the board's discussion, when this is desirable and/or requested.

Administrative Teamwork is Important

Such a procedural model obviously requires optimum cooperation between program administrators for the coordination of educational programs. To achieve this result, many parishes make use of a vehicle called an "administrative council." This is composed of all the directors, who meet regularly to exchange information, to schedule activities, to identify problems needing policy direction from the board, (thus helping to prepare the meeting agenda), and, of course, to choose from among themselves the one who will serve as "chief administrator" and who will officially present to the board the thinking of each individual. Such a "conciliar" type of structure not only increases operational efficiency but it promotes good working relationships between the various directors and helps them to "get their act together" both as professionals and as persons.

Step III

Strengthening Communication Within the Faith Community

The Home and School Association: Communication Arm of the Board

Although it is necessary to remember that parents' groups, (e.g., the home and school association) are *not formally involved in the educational policy process*, it is also important to honor and develop their role as communication facilitators. Such organizations can function as "pipelines" through which the board is able to receive necessary information about the mind of the faith community regarding educational matters

Policy does not spring into existence like Athena from the head of Zeus. It evolves and emerges from ideas concerning the values, convictions, needs and desires of the people whose lives will be affected by the policies.

One important segment of these people is constituted by the parents of children in the educational programs operating under the board's policy direction. It is appropriate, therefore, that the organization established to promote communication between parents and the program administrators also provide a forum and opportunity for dialogue among parents about the educational hopes and aspirations they have for their children, and about their reactions to authorized and operating programs. These sentiments and ideas should be recorded by the administrative staff and forwarded to the board for use in performing its functions of objective-setting and policy evaluation. In this way, parents can influence, properly and effectively, the shape and substance of educational policies.[6]

In passing, we must note that home and school associations can serve also as excellent sources of knowledgeable and enlightened candidates for future elections to parish policy bodies, such as the education board and the parish council.

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[6] "Many problems which parents perceive to be teacher – related or caused ought to be seen as policy problems and dealt with accordingly.

"For example, a parent might complain that his or her child is required to do too much homework. Obviously the first question to ask is what is the school policy on

Putting It All Together: Will It Work?

Decision-making in the Church today is no longer the simple, unilateral process of pre-Vatican history, when the majority of faithful, lacking training and management sophistication, looked to the better-educated hierarchy to direct their practical as well as spiritual lives.

Today, the Church is encouraging a now-mature laity to participate in the decision-making process. Moreover, the American Bishops have approved and promoted definite structures for such participation in the Church's educational mission—councils and boards of education.[7] But will the new model work?

The answer to that question is, "Yes, it will, if certain efforts are made by all concerned, and if certain conditions are present."

homework? If a policy exists, is it being followed? If a policy exists and is being observed, is it a good policy? If there is no policy on homework, perhaps one is needed. In any case the board of education has a responsibility either to require that existing policies be observed or that suitable policies be provided. The question of homework, then, is seen not simply as a problem between parent, teacher, and child, but as a matter of institutional policy and practice. The same can be true of a host of questions which may arise between parents and teachers. The policy approach to parent-teacher problems is indispensable, in my opinion, to a healthy, mature, and fruitful parent-teacher relationship." Excerpt from Murdick, Olin J., "What you Can Do For Your Parish School." *Liguorian,* Vol 65, No. 2, February 1977.

7 A central and recurrent theme in *To Teach As Jesus Did*, the American Bishops' pastoral on education, is the need to share responsibility for the educational ministry. The Bishops state therein (Cf. Chapter IV, Sections 137-143) that such involvement should be achieved through structures and processes that are representative of the People of God. The structure identified by the Bishops for achieving co-responsibility in educational decision-making is the board of education, through which "the educational mission can best be coordinated." (141)

Understanding Faith Community

Success as policymakers in Catholic education will begin with an understanding of ourselves as a faith community. When the faithful come together for a purpose or a project, they do so, not as affable groups of people clustering on the basis of common interest or congeniality, but *as believers*, who are united to one another by a bond stronger than blood kinship. That bond is a seriously-lived commitment to Christ, whom all recognize as God's Son and whom each seeks to serve.

This fact constitutes the dramatic, essential difference between similar secular and religion-affiliated organizations, and between similar secular and religion-affiliated processes such as educational policymaking. Therefore, although appropriated from public education, Catholic boards of education do not exactly parallel their public school counterparts. The difference is the spiritual, faith dimension to the lives of the Catholic policymakers, that faith commitment to which they are hereby striving to give open and structural witness.

Understanding Authority

The authority exercised by the faithful through approved structures (e.g. council, board, etc.) is as distinctive as the faith community within which, and in whose name, decisions are made. In the secular arena, decision-makers derive their authority from the people who have constituted themselves into a nation, and for whom participation in government is a right of citizenship. In the Church, however, governing authority derives from one source, the power of the Risen Christ, and has two manifestations, both indicated in the Second Vatican Council's document, *Lumen Gentium.*[9]

The *first* of these is *hierarchical/official* in character and relates to the governing authority which comes from Christ through the apostles, to their successors, the college of bishops. This channel of authority pertains to a function of formal management in the institutional Church and is publicly recognized as such by the faith community. The *second* manifestation is *sacramental/communal* in nature and pertains to the responsibility for the Church which each of its members possesses by virtue of baptism, confirmation and eucharistic communion, and which is a personal gift of the Holy Spirit. It is, in fact, the basic warrant or ground for any kind of ecclesiastical authority and sometimes emerges as charismatic leadership.

[9]10-13; 18-23, 27; 30-33, 36.

These two manifestations are not in conflict with one another, but rather in cooperative, creative tension; and the faithful truly share in both. Lay participation in ecclesiastical management and decision-making, therefore, is more than a matter of simple delegation. It is an intrinsic right of every Church member, and has a validity and reality of its very own.

Authority over Catholic Education

To grasp this complex and developing concept of authority in the Church as it applies to educational policy-making, it is helpful to remember that the original language of canon law (stating that the bishop has authority over all Catholic schooling in his diocese) sought to insure orthodoxy of teaching. This duty of the bishop, shared with pastors and people, remains unaltered and continues to protect the purity of community faith and morals. The hierarchy, moreover, still has the right to be concerned that instructional programs identified as "Catholic" operate under a Catholic philosophy of education, and that they be true to Catholic principles. Within these limits, however, the faithful can and should share responsibility for directing Catholic school and non-school religious educational programs; and they should participate formally and informally in the policy-making process.

The rationale for such "shared responsibility" is clearly present in the Vatican Council II documents which state that the laity should be involved in all decisions affecting their lives and that appropriate structures should be established for this purpose.[9] The widespread implementation of this directive in the American Church is a matter of public record and represents evidence that bishops and pastors are willing to share with the faithful both the privilege and the burden of policy decision-making. The next move now belongs to the laity. It is up to them to demonstrate that they are equal to these new responsibilities and that they can function in their new roles with competence and success.

Effort Two: You Gotta Know the Players

To the required understanding of (a) faith community and (b) authority must be added the need to *understand well* the various

[9]Chapter four of *The Constitution on the Church*, is expressly devoted to the issue of greater lay involvement (pp. 9-96) and indicates a new and creative approach to the role of the laity in the Church. In this chapter, also, the Council Fathers recognize the need for "agencies set up by the Church for this purpose." Abbott, Walter M., *The Documents of Vatican II*, New York: America Press, 1966, p. 64.
The *Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church*, *Ibid*, pp. 396-429 deals with the advisability of collegial decision-making.

roles and functions of each group involved in the decision-making complex: pastors, councils, boards, parents' associations, and administrators. Such understanding will involve, not just simple knowledge of one's own job, but a sincere and efficacious determination not to invade another's area of responsibility.

This warning is especially necessary in order to guard professional educators and program directors against infringement by overzealous council and board members, whose proper activities are those of policy-formulation, not administration. Once the policies take written form and are approved and promulgated, the *active* role of the policymakers changes to one of *passive* (i.e. indirect) monitoring through reports. Implementation of the policies is the exclusive concern of the professional educators, who are retained by the board for this purpose and accountable to the board for effective policy execution.

Effort Three: You Gotta Know Your Own Lines

Finally, success in the educational policy process will require definite skills and competencies, without which the best intentioned policymaking efforts will disintegrate into interesting but sterile discussion.

Every education board member must, for example, know:

—what an objective is and how to develop it;
—what a policy is and how it differs from a regulation;
—where policy comes from and
—how it gets formulated;
—what happens to the policy after it is formulated and approved;
—what constitutes a well-run meeting and how to achieve it;
—how a good board member conducts himself/herself during the meeting;
—what personal preparation is expected before the meeting;
—how a responsible board member conducts himself/herself outside and after the meeting;
—the role of the board in planning;
—the role of the board in budgeting;
—the role of the board in evaluation.

And think not for one moment that even the preceding partial list of skills and competencies can be managed without sacrifice of time, effort, and personal inconvenience! It will involve all this and more. Policymaking for Catholic education is extremely demanding work, but it is also a tremendous privilege and a source of abundant joy and, therefore, more than worth all the energy and effort required to do the job.

The Indispensible Condition: Human Faith

So, all the necessary components for success are at hand. All the best organizational tools and structures are available to us for fashioning a Catholic educational policy process worthy of its destiny.

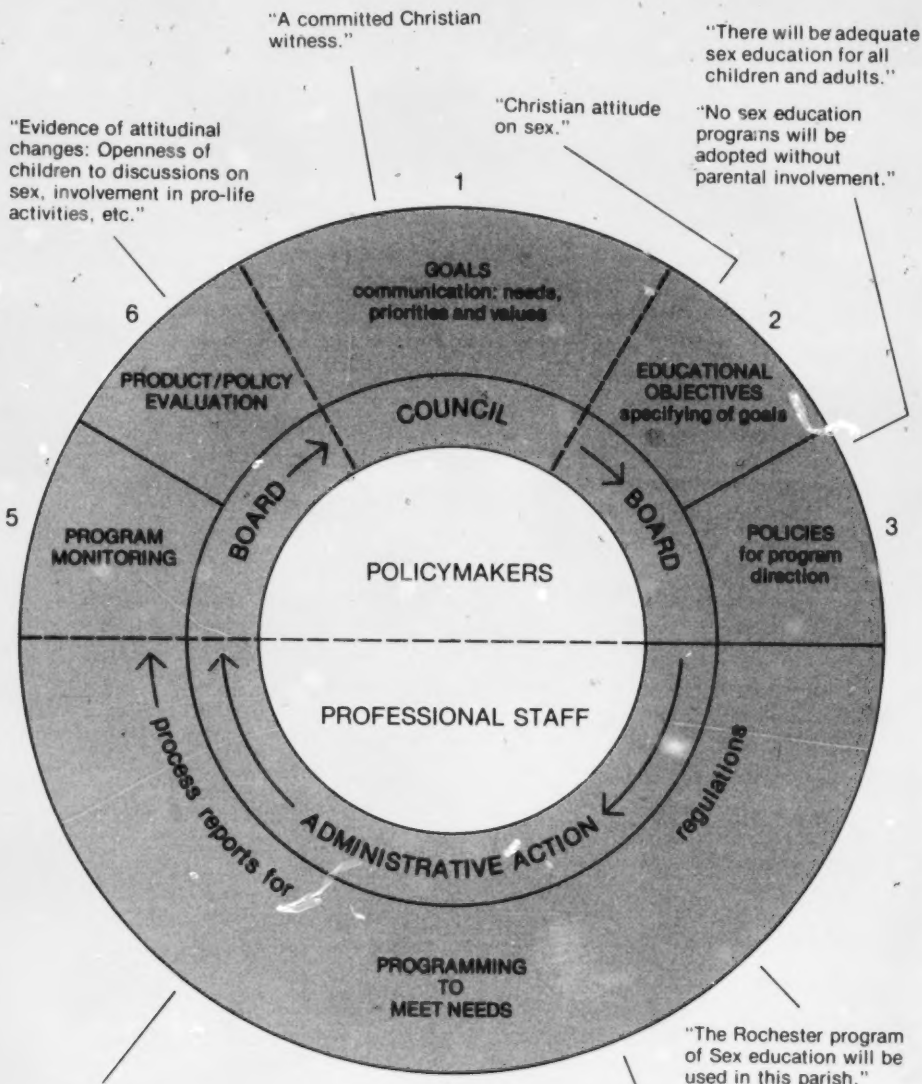
But even the most brilliantly conceived model of participatory decision-making will not work without the presence of one last element: ***Human Faith***. Unless the individuals who undertake these important new roles and responsibilities have a mutual confidence in the good faith and expertise of one another, and unless each person trusts the others to handle competently whatever is their particular function, the entire project will fall apart, and the last state may well be worse that the first—that is, the collapse may generate the negative judgment that "we tried the new decision-making model, but it doesn't work."

Success or failure will depend, not upon the design of the structures, but upon the performance quality of the people operating within the structures. Pastors, policymakers and administrators must make it a matter of conscience to be sure that each of them is properly trained and appropriately disposed to the task they are assuming; and each must look to the other with confidence and trust, as a co-partner in this challenging mission of participatory decision-making in Catholic education.

The pieces *can* be put together. The model *can* work. Whether or not it happens in YOUR parish depends upon YOU.

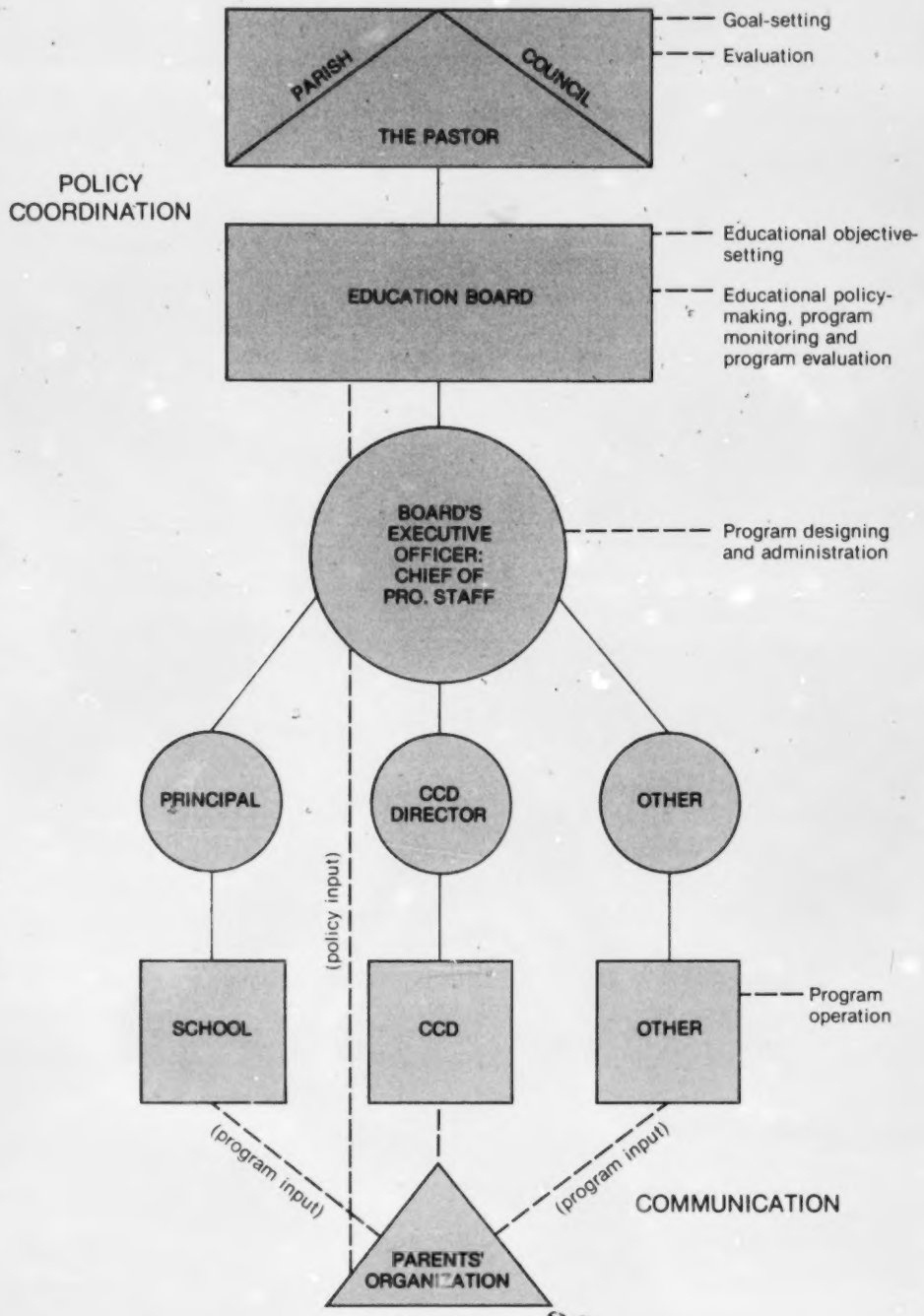
Appendix

Vatican II Decision-Making



This diagram was adapted from the "Davies-Brickell Loop" by Dr Mary Angela Harper, Executive Director of the National Association of Boards of Education, and Msgr. Olin Murdick, former Secretary for Education of the United States Catholic Conference

Parish Organizational Model



Articles:

I. Name of Organization

II. Objectives:

- ☐ to provide a structure within which parents can exercise their role as co-partners with the school in the education of their children;
- ☐ to provide a forum in which parents can articulate their values and express their wishes regarding the school program, so that these can be communicated and give direction to the formal policy making body of the parish;
- ☐ to help promote quality Catholic education;
- ☐ to assist the pastor, principal and teachers;
- ☐ to encourage high standards of family life.

III. Membership and Dues:

- ☐ requirements for membership;
- ☐ dues;
- ☐ statement of membership year;
- ☐ eligibility for meeting participation or in elective or appointive office.

IV. Officers and Their Election:

- ☐ officers named, including ex officio and honorary;
- ☐ method of election;
- ☐ length of term;
- ☐ re-election rules, consecutive terms;
- ☐ role of pastor and/or principal;
- ☐ installation.

V. Nominating Committee:

- ☐ method/time of appointment, number on committee;
- ☐ number of candidates for each office;
- ☐ report of membership;

VII. Meetings:
- ☐ schedule of meetings;
- ☐ quorum.

VIII. Executive Committee:
- ☐ composition of executive committee;
- ☐ duties of executive committee;
- ☐ meeting times.

IX. Standing and Special Committee:
- ☐ creation and appointment of chairman/members;
- ☐ presentation of committee programs to executive programs;
- ☐ president as ex-officio member of committee.

X. Amendments:
- ☐ number/percentage of votes required;
- ☐ adoption of revisions.

XI. Parliamentary Authority

XII. Federation Memberships:
- ☐ delegates; terms; dues.

Outline Constitution for a Parish Board of Education

Articles

I. *Title:* Name of board

II. *Nature and Jurisdiction:* It is a policymaking body, representing the parish in educational matters, responsible for educational programs (named), and operating under the goal-setting direction of the parish council.

III. *Functions and Duties:* listed

IV. *Membership:* Ex officio and elected representatives

terms of office

selection process (nomination and election)

status and privileges of executive officer (e.g. principal, CCD director, etc.) who functions as chief administrator directly responsible to the board for policy implementation

V. *Officers:* titles, by whom elected, eligibility, duties, re-election

VI. *Meetings:* schedule, quorums, number of votes necessary to carry motion, executive sessions, open meetings, keeping of minutes, conduct of meetings form of agenda

VII. *Amendments:* presentation of amendments, voting procedures, bylaws amendments

(Complete sample constitutions available free of charge to NABE members from NABE Clearinghouse, NCEA, One Dupont Circle, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20036)

Constitution Outline for a Parish Council

(Used with permission from
Handbook for Parish Councils,
Archdiocese of Washington, DC,
1975, p. 21)

Rather than write an entire Constitution and By-Laws by way of illustrating how the principles discussed or mentioned in this Handbook might be implemented by a parish, it was considered more appropriate and valuable simply to provide a skeletal outline of a Constitution and those articles which such a document should contain as essential items. Each parish will necessarily draw up its own Constitution and By-Laws in relation to its own unique situation. By the same token, it is strongly recommended that any parish utilizing this sample outline, or devising its own, do do in the light of the Handbook and its provisions for a viable parish council.

Consequently a Constitution written for a parish council should necessarily include articles which address themselves to the following points:

1. *Purpose*

   Some statement of parish mission and allocation of parish authority and responsibility and relationships.

2. *Membership*

   - ☐ What parish capacities, function, or offices shall be represented?
   - ☐ How many persons shall comprise the council (minimum and maximum figures)?
   - ☐ What is the lower age limitation for membership?
   - ☐ What is the length of the members' terms of office?
   - ☐ How shall terms of office be staggered, if necessary?
   - ☐ How shall vacancies on the council be filled?

3. *Nomination and elections*

   - ☐ Provision for a Nominating Committee
   - ☐ Publicity for forthcoming elections
   - ☐ Criteria for eligibility to vote and to run in elections

4. *Meetings*

- ☐ Frequency of meetings
- ☐ Quorum for meetings
- ☐ At least one (1) open meeting per year
- ☐ At least six (6) general meetings per year
- ☐ Provision for emergency or special meetings
- ☐ Notification of forthcoming meetings and items for agenda

5. *Committees*

- ☐ four (4) prescribed (Administration, Social Concerns, Liturgy, Education)
- ☐ Provision for others as necessary —— authority to constitute
- ☐ Criteria for membership elgibility and/or recruitment
- ☐ Provision for election or appointment of chairperson by council president
- ☐ Provision for consultants

6. *Officers*

- ☐ Duties
- ☐ Manner of election
- ☐ Two (2)-year term of office for all

7. *Amendments*

- ☐ Provision for notification in advance
- ☐ Provision for margin of vote to carry proposed amendment

8. *Rules of Order*

- ☐ Some generally accepted system should be cited and retained.

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002-79